

A new era of transparency and openness?

We were promised in Labour's Manifesto a new era of transparency. The Labour leader came over as a virtuous puritan, out to clean the stables and run an austerity policy. Modest additions to spending would be precisely costed and specifically funded by a small tax rise here or a small spending cut there. It was not exciting or uplifting, but some people liked it whilst many others wanted to show their disapproval of the then government.

So what went wrong? Why are MPs and journalists told that they should not expect to know what is in the alleged £22 bn black hole we hear about continuously? Maybe one day the Treasury will allow us to peep, but not before the budget. We hear large uncosted and unfunded spending commitments being made as the government offers inflation busting pay awards to various public sector groups well above the pay inflation allowed for in the budget figures. Why is there no formal Treasury statement of cost and explanation of how it will be paid for? Why is there no Office of Budget Responsibility forecast and commentary as promised? The government is busy breaking the new law it is bringing in to make an OBR assessment essential for such events.

Why have various senior civil servants turned up as senior advisers or Ministers? What does that tell us about civil service impartiality? Why have donors turned up in jobs or with favoured passes and access?

Why are they agreeing to close down our primary steel making capacity before completing and publishing their steel strategy? What is the point of a strategy if you have no industry left? How are they allowing in the budgets for future revenues for the accelerated decline of the oil and gas industry? This is the industry which pays several times as much tax per pound of profit as anything else?

All the government says about anything is that it is all a mess thanks to the previous government. It also complains about all of us, alleging there is a societal black hole. Government is about tackling the problems before you. Normal governments explain the issues and then set about supplying the remedies. When they announce increased spending they cost it, get it approved and explain how it is being paid for. Most leaders try to point the country to a better tomorrow and take pride in what is working and is good. How much longer can this government keep up the bad mouthing of the country, the NHS, political groups they do not like, and the state of society?